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EUR FOR PDAS VOLKER
EUR/WE FOR ALLEGRONE, CLEMENTS, AND CERVETTI
EUR/ERA FOR CHASE
WHA FOR SHAPIRO, MADISON, AND MCCARRY
WHA/CCA FOR REGAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/09/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CU](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: SPAIN/CUBA: ENGAGING MEMBERS EU TO REINFORCE
PRINCIPLED POSITION ON CUBA

REF: A. MADRID 629

[1](#)B. HAVANA 332
[1](#)C. HAVANA 322
[1](#)D. MADRID 545
[1](#)E. MADRID 425
[1](#)F. MADRID 338

Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. As discussed in reftels, Spanish FM Miguel Angel Moratinos and a top-level MFA team visited Havana April 1-3 and concluded political, economic, and cultural agreements with the Cuban Government. In effect, FM Moratinos undertook a major reorientation of Spanish policy, inverting Spanish priorities dating back to the Felipe Gonzalez presidency by shifting the emphasis from democracy and human rights to improving relations with the Castro regime. The form and substance of the Moratinos visit appeared to violate the spirit of existing EU policy towards Cuba. Moratinos justified his visit and his policy shift based on the assertion that Spain has more at stake in Cuba than any other EU member. The Zapatero Government has evidently determined that a succession has already taken place in Cuba, and that it is in Spain's interest to support this succession. This is a disappointing, but not surprising development, since the Zapatero Government had previously discussed its preference for a gradual transition in Cuba and its preoccupation with maintaining stability during this period rather than actively encouraging reform.

[1](#)2. (C) Since there is little likelihood of walking Moratinos back on this issue, we believe the USG should move swiftly with other EU governments to prevent any erosion of support for the EU Common Position on Cuba or for the EU's 2003 Restrictive Measures on Cuba and to discourage EU members from accepting continued Spanish leadership within the EU on the Cuba issue. While former Communist states agree with overall USG views on Cuba, they carry little relative weight with Spain and only the engagement of larger EU member states is likely to prevent Madrid from dramatically easing EU policy towards Cuba. Spain could attempt to use the May/June review of the EU Common Position on Cuba as a vehicle to obtain explicit EU backing for Spain's policy shift. We have included suggested language below for engaging both Spanish officials and other EU Governments, as well as a list of EU partners that may have particular influence with Madrid or could otherwise influence EU policy towards Cuba. While we are confident in our analysis of the Moratinos visit as discussed below, we leave open the possibility that Moratinos may share additional context when he briefs the Ambassador; Moratinos is in Central Asia the week of April and we are

seeking a meeting with him when he returns. End Summary.

//MORATINOS VISITS CUBA//

13. (C) Although Post was aware of a desire by FM Moratinos to visit Cuba, the final planning for his April 1-3 trip took place with minimal notice to the USG (or, it seems, to Spain's EU allies). It appears that Moratinos dismissed the advice of his key Latin America experts and opted to proceed quickly and with an agenda that was advantageous to the Cuban Government. As discussed in refs A, B, and C, key outcomes of the Moratinos visit included agreements on political, economic, and cultural issues:

-- Political: Spain and Cuba agreed to hold bilateral discussions on human rights issues, with the first session to take place in May at the MFA Director General level. Parameters for discussion are not clear, but Cuban FM Perez Roque said there would be no discussion of "internal" Cuban issues and denied that there were political prisoners in Cuba.

-- Economic: Cuba agreed to discuss repayment of official Cuban debt to Spain and a possible negotiation of a bilateral investment treaty. Cuba also agreed to the resumption of Spanish development assistance programs.

-- Cultural: Cuba agreed to start discussions on reopening Spanish Cultural Center in Havana

As noted in ref B, the results of the visit were obviously favorable to the Cuban Government; it is less clear how the results advanced Spanish interests in Cuba. The form and the substance of the Moratinos visit indicates that the Zapatero Government has determined that a succession has effectively already taken place in Cuba and that it is in Spain's interest to promote very positive relations with the existing

Cuban Government.

//WHAT WILL SPAIN DO NEXT?//

14. (C) Now that the Zapatero Government has embarked on this course, we logically expect Spain to actively seek a similar level of engagement in Cuba by other EU governments and to pursue:

-- The elimination of the EU's 2003 Restrictive Measures on Cuba.

-- Termination of the EU's nascent "Strategic Plan" on Cuba.

-- A reduced emphasis on EU Common Position in favor of bilateral efforts by individual EU Members (a "coalition of the willing" instead of a united approach).

The timing of the Moratinos visit is important, as it provides Spain time to work these issues before the June review of the EU Common Position on Cuba. As Moratinos has asserted that Spain has a greater stake in Cuba than any other EU country, we also expect Madrid to work to sideline countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, that have previously objected to easing EU policy towards Cuba.

//HOW CAN USG RESPOND?//

15. (C) We suggest the following measures:

-- In Madrid, continue to reiterate USG's disappointment over the visit to Cuba of FM Moratinos and his failure to meet with dissidents.

-- Determine how Spain intends to proceed and continue to raise the Cuba issue at every turn, closely tracking developments in the Cuba-Spain dialogue and monitoring the

results.

-- At the EU level, contain the damage to EU Cuba policy by impeding Spanish efforts to water down EU restrictions on engagement with Cuba and hindering any Spanish efforts to block EU criticism of Cuba's human rights practices.

-- Work to convince other EU countries to counter the notion of presumed Spanish leadership on Cuba issues, now that Spain itself has broken EU consensus. There is no reason they should abdicate their national interests to Spain.

//SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS FOR USE WITH SPANISH OFFICIALS//

¶6. (C) We cannot undo the damage done by the Moratinos visit to Havana, but we can complicate Spain's efforts to give a European stamp of approval to a succession of the dictatorship in Cuba. Our first step should be to place Spain on the defensive and we offer the following suggested points with this objective in mind.

¶7. (SBU) -- USG disappointed with both the timing and the form of FM Moratinos' visit to Cuba

-- The visit sends the wrong message to the Cuban leadership that Spain supports a succession from Fidel to Raul, which is the continuation of the only dictatorship in the Western Hemisphere.

-- The failure to meet with dissidents was very well understood by both the democratic opposition and the Castro regime. This was the price imposed by the Cuban Government and Moratinos willingly paid it.

-- There had been no sign of positive change by the Cuban authorities since Spain convinced EU to suspend Restrictive Measures on Cuba in 2004. On the contrary, the Castro regime escalated intimidation, including a resumption of mob attacks against dissidents ("Acts of Repudiation").

-- Fidel Castro's temporary absence did not lead to any indication of economic or political reforms.

-- The format of the visit clearly reinforced the Castro Government at the expense of human rights activists. It was especially disappointing that FM Moratinos did not dispute Cuban FM Perez Roque's description of dissidents at "mercenaries in the pay of a foreign power" during their joint press conference.

-- USG has made a good faith effort to collaborate more closely with Spain on Cuba, particularly at this important moment in Cuban history. In our view, this tracked with Spain's emphasis on multilateral diplomacy rather than unilateral action. We need to clarify whether Spain is interested in working with us on Cuba.

-- We took note of FM Moratinos' statements regarding the importance of Cuba to Spain. We agree Cuba is important to Spain for cultural and economic reasons, but given Cuba's proximity to the U.S., developments in Cuba are of even greater importance to us.

-- It appears that our earlier tactical differences have evolved into fundamental strategic differences. The absence of a public call by Spain for democratic reforms during the visit to Havana tells us that Spain has determined that a succession has already taken place and has opted to bless the continuation of the dictatorship. A perpetuation of the dictatorship is not in the interest of the U.S. or the Cuban people. Spain seems to have a differing view.

//SUGGESTED POINTS FOR OTHER EU MEMBER STATES//

¶8. (SBU) As we are not in a position to know the best approach to each EU government we seek to influence on this issue, the points below are crafted with the idea that they

would be relayed to Madrid, underscoring the depth of the USG's concern and our determination to convince other EU governments to engage on this issue:

-- USG disappointed with both the timing and the form of FM Moratinos' visit to Cuba, particularly his decision not to meet with pro-democracy activists. We are seeking clarification of whether the Moratinos visit indicates a break with EU policy towards Cuba.

-- There had been no sign of positive change by the Cuban authorities since Spain convinced EU to suspend Restrictive Measures on Cuba in 2004. On the contrary, the Castro regime escalated intimidation, including a resumption of mob attacks against dissidents ("Acts of Repudiation").

-- The format of the visit clearly reinforced the Castro Government at the expense of human rights activists. We do not understand why FM Moratinos did not dispute Cuban FM Perez Roque's description of peaceful dissidents at "mercenaries in the pay of a foreign power" during their joint press conference.

-- Even if Cuba releases a few political prisoners or temporarily shifts its repressive tactics, our sense is that the Spanish visit to Havana demonstrated a clear vote of confidence and legitimacy for the Castro regime, undermining the long term possibilities for reforms that would benefit the Cuban people as a whole.

-- In the past, the EU has consistently demonstrated its support for democratic reform in Cuba and for improved human rights conditions. The EU Common Position on Cuba has created a stable transatlantic understanding of our joint commitment to democracy in Cuba. The EU's 2003 Restrictive Measures on Cuba, even though suspended in 2004, sent a clear message that the EU cared about human rights developments in Cuba.

-- USG would like to know whether the Moratinos visit to Cuba indicates a shift away from the EU Common Position and the EU Restrictive Measures.

-- U.S. remains committed to working with the EU to advance democracy in Cuba. Very important to us not to let tactical differences get in the way of shared strategic objectives. Our sense is that the visit by Minister Moratinos gave Spain's blessing to the continuation of the Castro dictatorship, indicating that we have gone from having tactical differences with Spain to having strategic differences.

-- In these circumstances, the U.S. does not believe Spain should be permitted to have the only, or even the dominant voice in EU relations with Cuba. We are past the days of "spheres of influence."

-- The EU should be in the lead in demanding adherence to the EU's own policies with respect to Cuba. No need for the

EU to go along with perpetuating the only dictatorship in the Western Hemisphere.

//KEY EU PLAYERS ON CUBA ISSUE//

19. (C) Embassy Madrid's sense is that the following EU Governments would be the most receptive to challenge Spain's direction on Cuba, or are important enough to act as a brake on Madrid's initiatives within the EU. We have included a brief notation for each explaining why their involvement may be relevant to Spain or to the USG:

Germany: Current EU Presidency (NOTE: Local contacts tell us that German Chancellor Angela Merkel may be opening the April 24 conference in Berlin of the "International Committee for

Democracy in Cuba," representing a potential opportunity for the public clarification of EU policy towards Cuba. END NOTE).

Portugal: Next in line for EU Presidency, already helpful to USG on Cuba.

Sweden: Strong human rights posture, currently involved in diplomatic dispute with Cuban Govt.

UK: Important human rights activity by UK Emb in Havana

Netherlands: Active human rights presence in Havana, allows dissidents Internet access at Embassy.

Italy: A leading EU investor in Cuba. Skeptical of Castro regime, but may need to shore up to prevent from following Spanish lead for economic reasons.

France: Relevance may hinge on elections. Sarkozy appears sufficiently close to former President Aznar that he could be influenced to take tougher line on Cuba.

The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and the Baltics are generally opposed to Spanish policy on Cuba, but Madrid ignores or dismisses their input in European councils on Cuba issues. In order to influence Madrid, these countries would need the support of at least one of the larger EU member states.
Aguirre